



Klamath Network Featured Creature

May 2010

Western Pond Turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*)

FIELD NOTES:

General Description:

The western pond turtle (also answers to Pacific pond turtle) was, until recently, a *Clemmys* genus member but is now the sole member of the *Actinemys* genus. No matter the name or classification, it's identified by its wide, low, and smooth shells, the dorsal shell being dark brown to olive and the plastron (hard plate underneath) being yellowish with dark blotches in the center. Males have larger heads and tails, a pointier snout, and a wider neck with white and yellow on the chin and throat, whereas females are smaller with blunter heads and darker markings on the chin and throat. Both sexes have marbled bodies and webbed feet. Hatchlings have longer tails, softer shells, and lighter coloring than the adults. The northern subspecies, found in the Klamath area, grows to be about 210 mm (8.5 in) long.

Reproduction and Development:

Actinemys marmorata mates May-August, after which the female digs a nest during the night, safe from most predators' eyes, and deposits a clutch of 5-13 eggs. Incubation takes about 3 months. In higher incubation temperatures, more males are born and vice versa. Juveniles may stay in the nest chamber until the following spring and then head for water. As they grow, their shells harden and their coloring darkens, reaching adulthood in about 8 years. Only about 10% of juveniles make it to adulthood, with the rest falling victim to a long list of predators. However, the ones that do may enjoy a possibly very long life; adults live 40-70 years in the wild.

Where to See It in the Klamath Parks:

Lassen Volcanic, Redwood, and Whiskeytown all have confirmed incidences of the western pond turtle.



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<http://www.californiaherps.com/turtles/pages/a.m.marmorata.html>

More Information:

USDA Forest Service. Western pond turtle (*Clemmys marmorata*). Natural History. Redwood Sciences Laboratory: Pacific Southwest Research Station. 1997. Online. (http://www.krisweb.com/biblio/gen_usfs_ashtonetal_1997_turtle.pdf). Accessed 24 May 2010.

Diet:

Actinemys marmorata is truly omnivorous, dining off a broad menu of fish, crustaceans, midges, dragonflies, beetles, caddisflies, stoneflies, grasshoppers, carrion, willow and alder catkins, ditch grasses, pond lilies, and algae. While not particularly picky eaters, males do tend to eat more meat while females favor plants.

Habitat:

Slow moving waters (1-5 m [3-16.5 ft] deep) in rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, wetlands, estuaries, and other water bodies are all potential homes for the western pond turtle. Requirements of a good home include an ideal shade and sun combo: adequate cover (vegetation, algae, etc.) from predators and a basking area on logs or boulders for thermoregulation. Once a suitable sunning area has been found, the turtles will fight to claim it as their own. Juveniles are mainly found in waters 12-33° C, whereas adults prefer it a bit cooler, at 10-17° C. These turtles winter on land, settling down in a burrow of leaves or soil to wait out the cold. They're found up to 1980 m (6500 ft) in elevation but rarely venture above 1500 m (5000 ft).

Distribution:

The western pond turtle and its subspecies are native to the west coast, from Baja Mexico to Washington and possibly into southern British Columbia in Canada. The western pond turtle is the only turtle native to the Klamath Region.